



Baptisms

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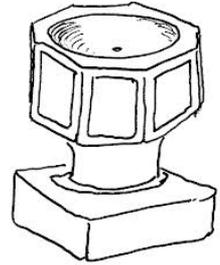
HUMBERCREST UNITED CHURCH

Guidelines for Parents Considering
Baptism for their Children

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Welcome,

This congregation of the United Church is pleased that you are considering having your child baptized! As one of the two sacraments celebrated by the United Church of Canada, baptism is a very significant event in your child's life and the life of our congregation. It is an equally important event in your parenting vocation, requiring commitment and devotion. Baptism, like marriage, should not be entered into unthinkingly or half-heartedly.



To help you make this decision, the Worship Committee of this congregation has developed this booklet. It is designed to serve three purposes:

FIRST,

To help you come to an understanding of the meaning of baptism and why it has a central place in the church's faith and life;

SECOND,

To make as clear as possible the nature of the commitment, you will be asked to make should you decided to participate;

THIRD,

To inform you of the specific guidelines which we have drawn up regarding preparation and planning before the event.

We hope that with the help of these few pages, and personal contact with our ordained minister, you will be able to come to your decision. You may decide that you are not ready to make the commitment; that's quite all right. However, if you are ready, then we promise to support you in that decision.

What is Baptism?

Let us be very clear about what we believe baptism is and what it is not:

WHAT IT IS:

From its very beginning, baptism has been the Christian church's way of initiating people into the membership of those who live their lives as followers of Jesus Christ. In the ancient church, only adults were admitted. After many months of instruction and discipline, they confessed their faith in Jesus as the son of God before the other



members, and then they were baptized by being fully immersed in water. This rite of initiation symbolized their dying to their old way of life and rising to a new life in Christ. From that moment on, persons lived their life in the full knowledge that they belonged to God and they committed their efforts to growing in that faith, to building up the church to which they belonged and to loving and serving others in the way taught by Christ. They now belonged to a worshipping community of faith.

Eventually, it became custom for children to enter the fellowship of the church through baptism. Obviously, they could not make that sort of commitment themselves, so the

parents took the vows on their behalf and made the promises to raise the child in the knowledge of Christ until he or she was old enough to make his or her own confession and commitment. This was how the stages of entering full membership emerged – baptism and confirmation. Even though it was now the parents who took the vows, the basic meaning of baptism as a sacrament remained the same. Sacraments are the church’s most powerful “visible words” proclaiming the very essence of the Gospel. In baptism, the parents are affirming their faith that their child is loved by God and belongs to God. When the parents take their vows, they are committing themselves before God and the church to do their utmost to raise their child to know what it means to be loved by God and what it means to love and serve in return.

The child is being baptized into a community of faith called the church. The parents are committing their child into the company of Christ’s people. **This means you are committing yourself and your child to a community of faith. This commitment entails an expectation of involvement in the work, worship and financial support of this congregation.**

WHAT IT IS NOT:

Baptism is not magic. It is not a spiritual inoculation to protect your child against mysterious evils. No child should ever be baptized out of any sort of fear: as Christians we believe that God loves all persons equally, whether they are baptized or not, and we trust the words of St. Paul who said, “nothing in death or life can separate us from the love of God”. (Romans 8; 38-39)

Neither is baptism meant to be a socially approved means of public name-giving.

THE BAPTISM SERVICE:

When you present your child for baptism, these are the questions you will be asked to affirm:

≈ Do you believe in God, Source of love;
in Jesus Christ, love incarnate and in the Holy Spirit, love's
power.

≈ Desiring freedom of new life in Christ do you seek to
resist evil, and to live in love and justice?

≈ Will you proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen in your
words and actions?

≈ Will you join with your brothers and sisters in faith
to celebrate God's presence, live with respect in creation
and love and serve others?

**If you choose to have God Parents (not tradition in the
United Church, but allowed) they will be asked the
following questions:**

≈ Will you share hope and support with this child
growing with her and him in faith, hope and love?

≈ Will you grow in faith with this child,
trusting that "you are not alone, you live in God's world"?

*The congregation will make the following pledge of
support:*

Pledge of Congregational Support

Will you, the congregation of Humbercrest United share your faith and support the children who come to this church community, ensuring there is a strong community of faith welcome to all seeking a church home?

Finally, it is essential to remember that Christians are “home-grown”. If your faith, and the church, play a vital role in your life and in your life as a family, then in all likelihood they will be important to your children. The Christian training and spiritual nurture of your children is an exciting adventure. We pray that you will accept its challenges and share in its joys.

